

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 ( ISO ) W

-----252253Z 114128 /53

R 251245Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9690

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, BC

SUBJECT: IMMINENT FORMATION OF BOTSWANA LABOR FEDERATION

1. SUMMARY: FIVE OF BOTSWANA'S TEN REGISTERED TRADE UNIONS WITH A COMBINED TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF APPROXIMATELY 9,000 OR 80 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S LABOR MOVEMENT ARE ABOUT TO FORM A LABOR FEDERATION. THIS ACTION IS BEING TAKEN AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE GOB DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, WHICH IS CONCERNED THAT THE ABSENCE OF A CENTRAL LABOR COORDINATING BODY HAS INHIBITED THE FUNCTIONING OF A NUMBER OF TRIPARTITE (GOVERNMENT-MANAGEMENT-LABOR) COORDINATING BODIES SUCH AS THE WAGES COUNCILS,  
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THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD. END SUMMARY.

2. INITIATIVE FOR THE FORMATION OF THE FEDERATION WAS TAKEN BY THE DIAMOND SORTERS AND VALUATORS UNION (32 MEMBERS). APPROVAL HAS ALSO BEEN GIVEN BY THE MEMBERS OF THE MINE WORKERS UNION (1,083 MEMBERS), THE BOTSWANA

RAILWAY WORKERS UNION (563 MEMBERS), AND THE BANK EMPLOYEES UNION (168 MEMBERS). THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF GOVERNMENT MANUAL WORKERS (7,000) IS EXPECTED TO GIVE APPROVAL ON MARCH 26. INAUGURATION OF THE FEDERATION HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 2 IN THE PRESENCE OF PRESIDENT KHAMA.

3. ACCORDING TO K. GABONEWE, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE BOTSWANA TRADE UNION EDUCATION CENTER (BTUEC), HIS ORGANIZATION WOULD BECOME PART OF THE FEDERATION FOLLOWING ITS FORMATION. THE BTUEC, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY THE AFL-CIO AFRICA-AMERICAN LABOR CENTER, HAS BEEN TO DATE THE ONLY COORDINATING BODY AMONG BOTSWANA TRADE UNIONS. A PRIME MOVER IN CONVINCING THE GOB OF THE NEED FOR THE FORMATION OF A LABOR FEDERATION HAS BEEN LKAUS HELFER, RESIDENT DIRECTOR OF THE FRIEDRICH-EBERT FOUNDATION.

4. SOURCES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAVE INDICATED TO THE VISITING REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER THAT THE PRIMARY FACTOR INHIBITING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN BOTSWANA FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS HAS BEEN THE NATIONAL POLICY ON INCOMES, EMPLOYMENT, PRICES AND PROFITS WHICH PUTS EXCLUSIVE POWER FOR WAGE DETERMINATION IN THE HANDS OF THE GOB. AS GEORGE E. BROWNLY ANTHONY, ACTING COMMISSIONER OF LABOR, INDICATED, " WITHOUT THE POWER TO NEGOTIATE WAGES, THE TRADE UNIONS HAVE LITTLE TO OFFER THEIR MEMBERSHIP". GABONEWE ALSO BELIEVES MANAGEMENT HAS TENDED TO INHIBIT THE GROWTH OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BY PROMOTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POTENTIAL LEADERS TO SUPERVISORY LEVELS THEREBY PRECLUDING THEM FROM UNION MEMBERSHIP AS A RESULT OF A 1974 AMENDMENT TO THE TRADE UNION ACT.

5. PRESSURE BY THE GOB TO FORM THE SUBJECT BODY HAS TAKEN SEVERAL FORMS INCLUDING A PROHIBITION ON UNION LEADERS ACCEPTING FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIPS DURING THE PAST YEAR UNTIL THE FEDERATION IS FORMED.

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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